

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 5th September, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.30 pm

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Present: Councillor Ian Wilkes (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Crisp	Reece
	Barker	Dymond	Richards
	Brown	Northcott	Wright

Apologies: Councillor(s) S Jones

Substitutes: Councillor Mark Holland (In place of Councillor Simon Jones)

Officers:	David Adams	Executive Director - Sustainable Environment
	Andrew Bird	Head of Sustainable Environment
	Denise French	Democratic Services Team Leader

Also in attendance:	Councillor Gill Heesom	Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing
	Councillor Trevor Johnson	Portfolio Holder - Environment and Recycling

13. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

14. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

15. **UPDATE FROM CABINET**

There was no update from cabinet.

Members asked for a progress update on the Air Quality project and whether the committee would be given an opportunity to scrutinise this as raised at the Council meeting on 6 July 2022.

The Executive Director for Sustainability explained that the Outline Business Case had been prepared in 2020 and had been subject to consideration by the relevant scrutiny committee. The Final Business Case was now being prepared. This would come to this committee for scrutiny and a special meeting would be arranged if needed.

16. **NEW POLICING MODEL AND IMPACT ON THE BOROUGH**

The committee welcomed Commander and DCI John Owen to the meeting. Commander Owen outlined the new policing model that had been implemented in June 2022. The new model saw the introduction of 10 local policing teams including one that covered the borough of Newcastle under Lyme with dedicated response officers, neighbourhood officers (called problem solvers) and a harm reduction focus working in partnership with the borough council. The new model had seen positive indicators to date with quicker response times and strong partnership working, particularly focused on Newcastle town centre. The staff numbers had increased now the school holidays had finished. The grade 1 response times were improving, crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) were both reducing, stop and searches were increasing.

Members raised queries and issues as follows:

- How would the model apply to rural areas? The committee was informed that there were now 60 response officers and 15 problems solvers and a harm reduction hub, dedicated to the borough and across different locations to give increased visibility and improved response times.
- Were there named officers for specific areas? There were not named officers for certain areas; the Commander explained that he had ownership of all policing both neighbourhood and response with 5 response teams and 3 neighbourhood teams. This allowed him to have an overview of the whole picture with resources being managed and allocated as appropriate. There was now 24/7 coverage. The aim was for councillors to link with the sergeant and PCSOs for their neighbourhood area and they would be the first point of contact.
- The 101 service for non-emergencies was seen as ineffective due to long wait times where callers were often kept in a queue. The committee was advised that the Chief Inspector was aware and was trying to resolve the issues with 101 in terms of speed of answering the phone and the speed of any response. There was also the option to report via social media which could be used for instant reporting.

In conclusion the Commander reported that the grade 1 response times were improving under the new model – the target was to respond in 13 minutes from point of call – responses had increased from an average of 69% to an average response of 78% with 95% achieved on 4 September. There were also decreases in daily crime and ASB occurrences helped by speedier responses; stop and searches were increasing and this gave confidence to the public that issues were being dealt with.

Resolved: that the update be received.

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17. **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S NEW RECYCLING COLLECTION SERVICE**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling introduced the report on the operation and performance of the new recycling service introduced in 2020. The

borough was now the second highest performer in Staffordshire in regards to recycling and he thanked staff for their role in transforming the service.

The Head of Sustainable Environment presented the report. The new service had received positive feedback from residents; the streets looked tidier; tonnage volumes of recycling had increased and the overall volume of waste had decreased. The number of missed collections had reduced and the quality of recycled materials was high.

The aims for the future were, in the short term, to increase separate food waste collections, enhance provision of services for those residents living in flats and look at options for participation in recycling by commercial and business properties. In the longer term the implications of the Environment Act 2021 were outlined:

- The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) would be set up whose role included holding the government to account on environmental issues.
- Producers would become responsible for the full net costs of their products after they had been used for their primary purpose.
- Introduction of a deposit return scheme for single use drink containers.
- Charges for single use plastics.
- Separation of waste requirements.

It was noted that the council's current recycling and food waste collection service met the requirements in the Act.

Members were informed that each cab had a Bartec system that monitored the route and a 20 minute audit was carried out on each collection vehicle every fortnight. This was mainly to ensure health and safety requirements were being adhered to but would also review quality of service. Feedback was provided to crews.

Members raised queries and points as follows:

- How would the council encourage residents to participate? The committee was informed that the service had invested in social media and had many followers on their page. This was a better way to engage with residents and more sustainable than printing leaflets. Experion was providing data on population profiles but this work was ongoing. There were also messages on the council's mobile advertising sources.
- Members noted that blue bags were sometimes taken without being replaced. It was explained that the system was that a replacement bag should always be provided; it could be due to use of agency staff who were less familiar with the process or that there were no replacement bags left on the bin wagon.
- The low numbers of take up of the food waste scheme (27%) could be due to some residents composting at home, lack of realisation of what could be included such as vegetable peelings or unwillingness to have a food waste caddy in their home. It was also noted that once food waste was separated it was clear how much was wasted and this could have a positive impact in reducing food waste.
- How had charging impacted the garden waste collection scheme? The scheme currently had 20,000 households subscribed to the service which represented just under half of households with gardens. The tonnage amount of garden waste was around 80% of the amount collected under the free service and the quality had greatly improved.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

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18. WALLEYS QUARRY ODOUR ISSUES

The committee considered the latest update report on the odour issues at Walleys Quarry.

The operator had appealed against the Abatement Notice served by the council. The pre-trial review would take place on 20 September and the hearing was scheduled for 24 October and could last for 4 weeks.

Current complaint data to both the council and the Environment Agency was presented along with data from the four air quality monitoring stations. The data from the monitoring stations showed a consistently low percentage of occasions when the annoyance threshold was exceeded. It was vital to ascertain whether these reductions reflected the works on site to increase capping or the warmer weather or a combination of both.

Members raised issues as follows:

- What was the future use of the site? The committee was informed that the planning permission outlined the full detail of the future use which included capping once a certain level was reached followed by a restoration and landscaping programme. The current type of waste would not be accepted after 2025 after which only inert waste could be accepted.
- Would the information about weather conditions and their possible impact be part of the hearing evidence? In response, Members were told that the Environment Agency had carried out work regarding weather and the correlation with odours. If the Contain Capture Destroy strategy was effective then the odours should be reduced regardless of weather conditions.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

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19. MINUTES OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The committee considered the regular digests from Staffordshire County Council outlining the work of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 July and 1 August 2022.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

20. MEETING WITH INTEGRATED CARE BOARD

The committee considered the notes of a meeting held between the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee and Tracey Shewan, Director of Communications and Corporate Services, Integrated Care Board.

The report updated on the latest position with Covid, including the current numbers of inpatients and the vaccination programme. The report outlined the position regarding recruitment to various roles in health and social care.

Members queried what was meant where it stated that there were challenges recruiting to social care as it was reported that there were no recruitment issues

regarding social workers for which there was a full complement of staff covering the borough. Members also asked for clarification on the “retire and return” scheme.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

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21. STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

The committee considered the report from the recent meeting of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel held on 27 June 2022.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

22. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme. A number of suggestions were made for future items.

Resolved: that the work programme be updated as follows:

- 28 November 2022 – Review of tennis provision in the Borough, Plans for Borough 850th Celebrations, Tri Services project for wellbeing.
- Special meeting in December (or when appropriate) to consider the Full Business Case for the Air Quality Project.
- 6 March 2023 - Use of grazing animals, Cycle routes/lane provision, Urban Tree Planting Programme.

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23. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

24. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 28 NOVEMBER 2022

**Councillor Ian Wilkes
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.12 pm